

# WORKERS' fight



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*"The emancipation of the working class will only be achieved by the working class itself" (Karl Marx)*

# Beyond the EU, we have A WORLD TO WIN!

Until the June referendum, the political scene will be dominated by the Tories' in-fighting and the wrangling between the "in" and "out" camps. And so will this May's elections.

Yet both sides are irrelevant for workers. After all, they both claim to be defending "Britain's national interest" - i.e., the interests of the bosses.

Why should workers support an "out" camp which wants to turn the clock back and reclaim full "sovereignty" for parliament? As if this isn't the very same parliament which is responsible for years of anti-working class attacks!

And why should workers support Cameron's "in" camp? Wouldn't this be endorsing, not just his new attacks against EU workers, but also his attacks, past and present, against all workers?

So, no, there is no stake for the working class in all this politicking over the EU.

## **Beware: it's a diversion!**

But what makes the EU charade completely mad is that, at the same time, the world is threatened by a new economic crash.

This, however, doesn't stop politicians from playing politics with the EU and even, in the case of the "out" camp, from claiming that the British economy has a future by "going it alone", against the rest of the world!

That a new crash will break out is no longer a question of "if", but merely a question of "when". And the government will be quick to turn the screw of austerity far tighter than ever before when this happens, to make the working class pay, in order to preserve capitalist profits.

Against this backdrop, the EU is just a convenient diversion for the bosses' politicians. It allows them to blame worsening living and working conditions on the EU's alleged "constraints" (in the



case of Cameron) or on EU membership (in the case of the "out" camp). And it allows both camps to blame EU workers for the lousy jobs and low wages that more and more of us have to put up with.

This is why the working class should not fall for their divisive con. Instead, we need to prepare for the new attacks they have in store for us so as to be ready to take them on.

## **This decaying system has no future**

The madness of the whole EU charade is also due to the survival of national states and borders.

What sense do these borders have today? When most common objects, like cars, TVs, mobiles, etc., are made with components from all over the world; when the internet creates links between people from every part of the planet. No sense, surely?

But what these borders do, is prevent the pooling together of all resources

- both human and economic - on a world scale. A rational organisation of the planet would require not just an EU, but a real World Union, with all resources available according to need, and all men and women able to travel and settle anywhere. After all, why should anyone still live in uninhabitable regions when there is space in temperate regions?

National borders only survive to serve this crisis-ridden, decaying capitalist system. Each national state serves its capitalists. Multinationals use the state of their home country to boost their profits, by means of procurements, handouts, protective tariffs, etc., when they are not using its army to bomb their way into poor countries. Wasn't the Iraq war caused by the greed of US and British oil companies?

The capitalist system has long been in a state of terminal decay. And the longer this decay goes on, the uglier its symptoms will become - until it is overthrown, once and for all. ☐

## Housing

From April 2017, social tenants will be forced to pay market value rent on their council homes if their household earnings are £40,000/year or above in London or £30,000/year outside London - a scheme described as "pay to stay". The difference is not meant to help struggling councils, but go straight into the government's coffers.

It was estimated that a family with an income of £40,000, paying an average London market rent would be £11,963 worse off than if they were earning just under the £40,000 threshold. After fierce criticism (an estimated 214,000 households in England would be hit) and in the run-up to the May elections, Osborne has made a slight u-turn,

### • Tenant woes

Picture this. One tenant every 90 seconds was threatened with eviction in England in the year ending December 2015, according to the charity Shelter. In England and Wales, 170 tenants were actually evicted every day for falling into arrears. In 2015, this came to 42,000 evictions, a rise of 11% since 2013, and the first time evictions have ever crossed the 40,000 mark. The worst-hit areas

### • The housing crisis and empty homes

With ongoing uncertainty in many world markets, property in major cities has become one of the most attractive havens for personal capital. But it doesn't follow that the purchasers come to live in those cities. More than 22,000 homes in London have been left empty for longer than 6 months according to data compiled from 31 of the 33 borough councils. More than a third of these had been empty for 2 years and over 1,000 for more than 10 years! The total figure may well be a conservative estimate, because owners are not obliged to tell councils their properties are empty. And

### • Piecemeal privatisation

A protest gathering outside the Greater London City Hall last month recently highlighted the creeping privatisation of public space in British cities.

City Hall itself is managed by private security firm AOS with rules and conditions for use of this space, independent of laws. The proposed Garden Bridge across the Thames in central London is controversial for similar reasons - to fund it, it would be available for hire (and closure to the public) for private parties some days of the year. Only the rich need apply, of course!

One of the largest such schemes, is

## Ripping social tenants off

introducing a taper which will increase rent gradually after income exceeds £30,000, with the most brutal rises coming after £50,000 is reached.

Working families on modest incomes will be hit hardest, given that adult children can't leave parental homes as they cannot afford private rents. So a couple living with just one adult child, all on the minimum wage, around £14,000 each a year, will push the household above the £40,000 threshold.

This is just another recipe for squeezing money out of working people and never mind if more and more are pushed into poverty. That is not Osborne's problem. No, but it is ours! ☐

were Enfield, Dagenham and Redbridge, followed by Peterborough, Bolton, Slough and Solihull.

Tenants are increasingly forced to meet rising rents on the low wages they get from casual employment. Where they had housing benefits, these are now being cut under the universal credit system. Is it any surprise that they should fall into arrears?

with councils able to impose a 50% premium on council tax for empty homes since 2013, they are less likely to.

As a consequence of this situation there are streets, like The Bishops Avenue in Barnet, of mostly empty houses, each worth tens of millions of pounds. Some councils are trying to address this - Islington has introduced fines for owners of new homes left unoccupied for longer than 3 months. But given the urgency of the housing crisis, storming and occupation is more like what's needed!

Liverpool One, a 34-street shopping centre in Liverpool, owned by the Duke of Westminster's Grosvenor estate. It is part of the city centre and caters for well-off shoppers who can park underground and not venture outside its bounds all day. For Liverpool's working-class population the shops would be prohibitively expensive; likewise its cafes, which are the only places to meet or rest. Corporations allowed to control new environments like this will create islands of affluence until, as in many poor countries, formally excluding the poor with members-only spaces becomes a next logical step.

Against evictions in Camberwell



### Letter from Sussex

In 1926, the Eastbourne Corporation, now the Borough Council, bought a great swathe of chalk downland, adjacent to the town - now part of the South Downs National Park. The idea was to protect it from development, preserve rights of way and, generally, keep the land for the free and unrestricted use of the people of Eastbourne "in perpetuity", according to the words of the then Mayor.

Now the LibDem-dominated council wants to sell off the four tenant farms on this downland. The present tenant farmers will be given first option, but, since the sale is meant to raise "millions", how will they find that sort of money? As for public "rights of way", the Council insists that National park status will protect these. A few years ago, however, Cameron was talking about selling off national parks and his government has just granted licenses for companies to frack under this one, despite the chalk being one of the country's most important aquifers! What kind of "perpetuity" lasts only 90 years?

### • MP = Maximum Payrise

Just 9 months after MPs were given a 10% wage rise, from £67,060 to £74,000 (basic) they apparently need another! So they'll get 1.3% more, or an extra £962. Oh, and their needs are so dire (despite their numerous expenses claims) that it made Cameron "forget" his pledge in May 2015 to freeze MPs' pay for the next 5 years, while he was pushing his tired old song "we are all in it together".

But Cameron hasn't forgotten to cap public sector workers's wages (paid out of the same budget), to the below-inflation 1%, for the 5th year! As to junior doctors (still taking strike action), they'll undoubtedly appreciate the increase awarded to MPs who are backing the government's attempt to cut doctors' incomes!

## The doctors' lonely crusade

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt said he would just impose the junior doctors' contract in August "to end uncertainty", since doctors refuse to agree to it. The BMA answered by announcing 3 more strikes of 48 hours, with emergency cover only: 9-11 March, 6-8 April and 26-28 April.

Hunt continues his "line" that the "7-day NHS" promised in the Tory manifesto depends on this contract. When of course he knows the NHS is already 7-days a week and that it's precisely junior doctors who provide clinical back-up for it! But behind his pretext is a cuts agenda (£22bn "savings" by 2020) which pushes an ever-increasing part of the huge NHS budget into the "for profit"

private sector.

So it's simple: doctors must cost less and work more. Very little has changed in the offer since the last strike - if docs work more than 1 in 4 weekends they'll get a bit more money. Unsocial hours would start at 9pm rather than 10pm and usually, Saturdays will still be part of the normal week. All in all, it's another economy forced on an underfunded, understaffed, NHS.

Which is why one can only wonder why not one NHS union leader - or any other - has organised anything concrete in support of the solitary stand being made by the doctors? Surely all workers have an interest in joining in? ☐

## Teachers leave them kids alone

Teachers, parents and pupils already know there aren't enough permanent, qualified teachers, that class sizes are too big and that everything's worse in poor parts of the country.

Now the National Audit Office (NAO) has presented a report on this sorry state of affairs - called "Training New teachers". Despite the Department of Education's own forecasts that pupil numbers would increase in 2015/16, it's been failing for 4

years to recruit and train more teachers. So teacher vacancies doubled from 2011 to 2014; 14 out of 17 secondary school subjects had unfilled training places in 2015/16, leaving pupils to be taught by unqualified teachers: in 2014, this applied to 28% of physics classes.

In England 28,148 graduates began training in 2015, when up to 40,000 new teachers are needed each year (there's high turnover due to burn-out). But it's

## • Britain's caste system

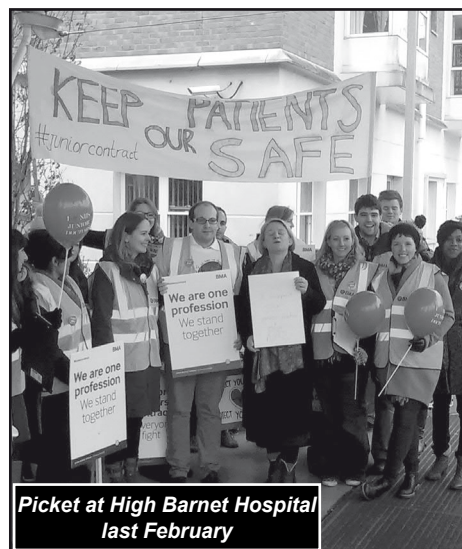
Again, something all of us already knew: that most of the "top people" in this society come from wealthy backgrounds and went to private schools charging fees which are higher than the annual earnings of most workers. Eton, for instance, costs £35,721 per year!

Nevertheless one could have hoped that all this was somehow changing - that more working class people would experience the British equivalent of the

"American Dream". But no! Alas, the class system still rules - if not more than ever!

The Sutton Trust just did a study which looked at 7,637 people mentioned in the Birthday lists of Sunday newspapers, thus providing a "snapshot of the country's leading people". And what did it find? That although private schools teach only 7% of Britain's pupils, half the country's senior civil servants, cabinet

## Public services



Picket at High Barnet Hospital last February

the same everywhere - and worse in Wales and Northern Ireland - where class sizes go over 30 in elementary schools. The NAO criticises the government for missing its own targets in an area where its imposed targets drive teachers mad. But for a while now, the Tories have been pushing for "Free Schools" in the independent sector. Could their "misses" in public education be deliberate? ☐

ministers and leading journalists were educated in them, together with seven out of ten generals and judges. A decade ago, half Britain's top doctors were privately educated; today it's 61%!

So British society is more elitist than ever - scarcely a revelation despite Cameron's claims to the contrary - but certainly underlining the fact that it is beyond repair and that its capitalist rulers need to be overthrown!

## Welfare

### • Attacking the disabled

In front of a panel of CEOs from Royal Mail, Barclays and BT, Cameron announced cuts in the Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and demanded an end to a situation where "more than half of people with mental health conditions (are) unable to find a job." As if these same CEOs were not busy shedding jobs, let alone making new jobs available for the disabled!

These ESA cuts are part of the government's new Welfare Bill. 500,000 disabled and long-term sick who are considered "unfit to work", but expected to "prepare for work", will have their ESA cut by 30%, from £102.15 to £73.10/wk. This attack on the most vulnerable is so gratuitous that it has already been voted down twice by the Lords. But, never

mind, Cameron is not giving up.

It's not that the government can even claim that the cut will help with its deficit: according to its own figures, it will only "save" £1.4bn over 4 years, which amounts to 0.05% of its total receipts! But there is logic in the government's vicious stubbornness. In order to conceal its generous handouts to the capitalists, it is convenient to blame the disabled for "costing too much"!

### • Department of Work till you drop?

One of Amazon's top executives, Doug Gurr, is to be appointed as non executive director of the Department of Work and Pensions.

We are told the appointment of industry leaders is supposed to offer the

department an "external perspective."

But what kind of "external perspective", has this boss to offer?

A report on Channel 4 news and the testimonies of former employees described the "slave like conditions in Amazon's warehouses" with the extensive use of zero hour contracts, timed toilet breaks, attempts not to pay agency workers their holidays and GPS-like trackers to measure how long each worker takes to pick out items in their huge warehouses (with penalties for extra minutes).

That should tell us something about the DWP's choice of policy advisor. He is an expert in turning the screw on workers. With the likes of Gurr on its board, the DWP should be renamed the DWE: Department of Workers' Exploitation...

## European Union

Cameron's "emergency brake" on EU migrants' in-work benefits is a blatant attempt to blame migrants for cuts to social spending. He claims that the British benefit system is a "pull-factor" for migrants, feeding "benefit tourism" that is a drain on the state's resources, at taxpayers' expense.

But this is a lie. A House of Commons Library research paper showed that, on average, EU migrants actually pay £1.34 in taxes for every £1 from the welfare system. In other words, whatever the reasons may be, which push EU workers to come to Britain, they are actually benefiting the economy! Current DWP figures show they represent only 2.2% of those claiming benefits, which include tax credits for the low-paid, of which 7% go to

### • EU deal: a staged act

"What we've got is what I basically asked for", said Cameron, boasting of having single-handedly wrangled "special status" for Britain from EU leaders. So what's really new about this "special status"?

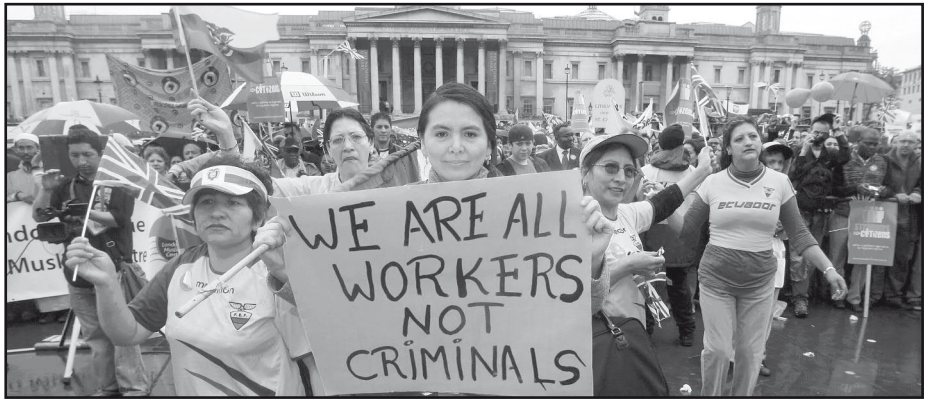
In fact, nothing. Britain will not have to introduce the Euro - but there was no question of this, anyway. Britain will not have to contribute to saving a European

### • Borders for capital, no way!

Big finance is definitely pro-EU. Losing free access to the European market would be a catastrophe for it. The big non-European financial institutions using the City as a base for their European operations would soon decamp to Frankfurt or Paris, together with the £800bn of non-European assets currently managed in London. The City would cease to be the biggest trading centre for the euro. And British capital would no longer be able to take its cut from of a huge volume of daily transactions...

Big British-based manufacturing also has a problem with Brexit. Whether foreign, like Nissan, Honda, BMW and Ford,

## Scapegoating migrant workers



migrants.

But behind his lies, Cameron is trying to divert attention from the fact that there would be no need for in-work benefits for anyone, British or otherwise, if it were not for the low wages paid by bosses and their

job-slashing. Instead of blaming EU migrants for the benefits they get and treating them as some sort of "parasite", it is the parasitism of the capitalists and their profiteering on the back of the working class that must be blamed. □

country in financial trouble - but it never has, not even in the darkest days of the Greek crisis. Britain will not have to join the passport-free Schengen area - but, again, there was never any question of the British government removing passport controls across the English Channel. Finally, Britain will not have to be more politically integrated into the EU. But the British government already has a de

facto veto over it! In other words, fundamentally, nothing's new under the sun!

After having postured so grandiosely against Brussels to please his party's right-wingers, Cameron can now lead the "in" campaign - which was always his intention, despite his long-standing anti-EU rhetoric.

### Corbyn's contradictions

Corbyn won the Labour leadership by promoting the "Old Labour" of the 1960s and 70s. At the time, he was part of eurosceptic left of the party with Tony Benn, and voted for Britain to leave the EEC (ancestor of the EU) in the 1975 referendum. Today, he blames the EU for the Greek crisis, austerity, privatisation, pollution - in short, for all of capitalism's ills across Europe.

Yet he's playing a pro-EU hand over the coming referendum. Of course, Corbyn criticised Cameron's "renegotiated membership", with its attacks on migrant workers. But he says the EU can be "reformed" and made more worker-friendly, environment-friendly, while promoting friendliness between nations. So, yesterday the EU was a big bad capitalist machine and today it is going to cure capitalism? Not too credible!

The truth is that neither the "in" nor "out" vote, will offer a way for workers to defend their interests. But, out of respect for this so-called "democratic" system, Corbyn won't expose this fact. Instead, he prefers to ask workers to vote "yes" - and, therefore, to endorse the very same attacks on their migrant brothers and sisters that Corbyn himself, has denounced!

Demonstration in Germany for the free circulation of workers



## The Tories' obsession with Europe...

Cameron's in/out referendum was always intended to keep a lid on the bitter divisions over Europe in the Tory party, but they burst out as soon as he named the date. The expected split among senior Tories, including a number who would like to succeed Cameron as Tory leader in, or perhaps before, 2020, produced some unpleasant surprises for him. While Theresa May already backed him,

leadership contenders Boris Johnson and Michael Gove quickly declared for the Out camp, joining Theresa Villiers, Iain Duncan Smith and Chris Grayling. A Guardian newspaper poll of 68 Conservative constituency parties found only 2 reporting a majority of members for staying in.

Cameron's best hope may be that the Out campaign shoots itself in the

## ... and their record of all-out in-fighting

The latest storm in the Tory teacup over the EU is nothing new. Over recent decades, each time they've been in a crisis, factional squabbles have broken out, in which Europe played a central part.

While in power, Thatcher managed to maintain party unity by combining a narrow nationalistic rhetoric with a pro-European policy. But after she was ousted, factional fights between the pro- and

anti-European factions came back with a vengeance. They were so bad that John Major called his eurosceptic colleagues "bastards" for their opposition to his signing the Maastricht EU treaty. Then, in their exile in opposition, the eurosceptic factions gained the upper hand: all the Tory leaders in this period - Hague, Iain Duncan-Smith and Howard - belonged to it.

## European Union

foot - there are now four rival groups jostling for recognition by the Electoral Commission and the TV broadcast slots that come with it. And the big names already campaigning for a leave vote, confirm that as always, the power struggle within the Tory party matters a lot more to them than Britain's membership of the EU.

Today, once again, we see Cameron walking a tightrope between the pro- and anti-EU factions of his party, in an attempt to contain the factional chaos. But by pandering to the eurosceptics with attacks on migrant workers, he may well manage to give them more legitimacy and shift the outcome of the referendum their way.

## The crisis

That the economy is getting closer to another crash is no big news. Increasingly jittery markets reflect speculators' fear of losing their cherished capital by making the wrong



The Frankfurt stock market

## A mad system

bet, while frantic flows of footloose billions across the planet are threatening the world economy with more instability.

This February, an anecdote highlighted this on-going madness. As the shares of Deutsche Bank, one of the largest European banks, were going into free fall, its executives thought they would restore confidence by releasing an accounting report giving the bank a clean bill of health. Alas. The result was a storm of headlines such as "Deutsche insists it can pay all its debts" - and Deutsche's share price slide accelerated. Obviously speculators considered that this optimism could only conceal bad news.

In fact, most bank shares were badly hit in February. Despite the so-called "regulations" introduced since the 2007-8 crash, the over-indebted banking system is hardly in a better shape than it was then. But

never mind. The fat cats' greed is in much better shape: Britain's "Big Five" banks have just announced £5bn in bonuses for their highest paid staff. The economy may crash tomorrow, but they'll be rich. What else matters? □

### Osborne's best of all possible worlds

Speaking at the G20 finance ministers meeting in China, Osborne said Britain "may need to undertake further reductions in spending because this country can only afford what it can afford". In other words, we should expect more austerity!

But, as recently as January, wasn't the same Osborne trumpeting that "real wages are growing", "the deficit as a share of GDP is down", "business investment is forecast to grow", etc.? So what's happened, so suddenly?

Officially, this change in mood is blamed on the worsening of the world crisis, particularly in the largest poor countries, like China and Brazil. But in fact the Office for Budget Responsibility has another explanation: the unexpected low level of income tax receipts - obviously due to the on-going low level of wages!

So while Osborne blames the rest of the world for economic troubles at home, he is preparing to target the poorest with more cuts, to be announced in his March Budget. And of course, the poorest are ideal targets for him, since they don't pay taxes and, therefore, forcing them further into poverty won't reduce his tax receipts!

## • More ominous warnings

Since the beginning of the crisis, the rich countries have reduced interest rates to close to zero. Together with other measures, this was aimed at reducing the cost of government borrowing, while discouraging banks from hoarding cash in central banks' vaults - thereby pushing banks to lend to the economy.

But it didn't work. The banks proved unwilling really to increase their lending and the capitalists, who didn't want to invest in an uncertain economy, proved reluctant to borrow. Most of the cash that was freed by these policies was ploughed into speculation.

But now, a new stage has been reached. Due to this failure, some countries (Japan and Switzerland, among others) have introduced negative interest rates: the banks have to pay for entrusting their cash with central banks. More strikingly even, in some cases like Japan, the demand for state bonds is so high that governments are able to borrow at a profit. In other words speculators chose to lose some money on these "safe" government bonds rather than to gamble in the more risky broader economy. This is how much they trust their own capitalist system!

**King's Cross railway station (London)****ISS workers back on strike!**

Kings' X ISS workers (we service Virgin East Coast trains) are ready to stage a 48-hour strike, starting on March 10th. We have many reasons to take action. ISS repeatedly pays us short, gives us fraudulent payslips which show we work 20 hours when we do 40 (which makes it hard for us to get loans and mortgages). The managers mess about with our shifts and make us use these ridiculously heavy backpack hoovers. They force us to sign agreements to changes in our

working conditions under the threat of the sack - like getting us to work more trains than we are meant to. And to top it all, they're cutting our numbers, replacing us with agency workers and making systematic use of harassment and disciplinaries. In short, we've had enough!

It seems ISS has forgotten our strikes over wages, just 3 years ago. Well, we're going to remind them! We know the only language they understand is STRIKE! As RMT leaders didn't seem convinced, we had to



organise several delegations to the union HQ to get them to move. This strike is our strike, due solely to our own initiative and we're determined to make the best of it!

- **Safety critical**

Trackside, tankers should always work in twos. But now ISS, Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) and Network Rail have joined ranks to say that not only can tankers work alone, but that safety training and certification isn't needed at all for us - neither for tanking, nor nose-end cleaning, since it's done from the platform.

It's a convenient and dangerous excuse to downgrade our jobs, and cut Health&Safety costs. As if H&S has a "price"! This is the thin edge of the wedge! What do they want - another

strike on top of a strike? [King's Cross Workers' Platform 24/02/16]

- **How to wake up bosses and "partners"**

Once more we ask: how is it possible that some of our mates are still on zero-hour contracts? And under the employ of the "big players" like VTEC? This is totally out of order! But it seems our protests, to both company and union, fall on deaf ears. There's only one option left and that's for all of us to stand together - outside the station! [King's Cross Workers' Platform 24/02/16]

- **Doing it on the cheap**

The brown stuff is about to hit the fan in EC (VTEC), if rumours are true. We already know they want to take on more chefs - so more food is to be served - but they only want temporary chefs, not permanent ones! And that's something we just won't accept!

Of course we'd like more hot, fresh, food served (in fact why not go back to having proper restaurant cars on all trains!?!), but not without all the extra hands we'll need to cope with it! [King's Cross Workers' Platform 24/02/16]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****Royal Mail's Black Mail**

Romec, Royal Mail's formerly outsourced cleaning and engineering maintenance company, is now back "in-house". But is it the good news it should be - warranting the huge self-congratulation of CWU officials who sealed the deal?

In fact the agreement offered by Royal Mail tied the buying back of Romec to a new 3-year contract which, following the union's recommendation, was endorsed by 97% of those who voted. RM's blackmail

meant that most of us felt we had no choice but to vote "yes" for the deal - even if it offers a de facto wage cut: 1% backdated to last April, just 1.5% in 2016 and 2% for 2017, and new hires on lower wages!

On top of cuts RM had made to prepare for part-privatisation in 2002, Balfour-Beatty (which bought a 49% share in 2002) and French-based multinational Cofely (which took over in 2013), squeezed us to the point where, 14 years down the



line, cleaners' wages are at £7.83/hr and temps are routinely used on zero-hours contracts. Under the new "in-house" contract there's no question of us getting better terms and conditions, let alone the "old" RM ones, but that's obviously something we can - and must - fight for!

- **DOM clucks...**

We've had enough of EC bosses who act like cowboys - or should we say "outlaws" - since they certainly don't act according to any workplace law that we know! Besides not being able to organise the work itself, they muck up everything they touch, whether it be our hours of work, our breaks, or our holidays! Are they unable to count or add up? The outlaws better watch out. O.K. Corral, here we (and Wyatt Earp)

come! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/02/16]

- **...and chocolate teapots**

Yes, and how many times have we told them that the PDA (handheld computer to record deliveries) is no good? It needs to be replaced with a new updated model, which actually works. But no, they use its misreadings to blame us for every misdemeanour under the sun (and rain!)? One wonders how they even got their jobs? Because these guys could

not run a bath. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/02/16]

- **Goodbye and good luck**

Another band of brothers and sisters is leaving on EVR - they'll be gone by 7 March! But we're hearing rumours of yet more redundancies. And since we don't see anyone being replaced, we wonder if RM is planning to substitute them - and us - with these new machines..? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/02/16]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**

**Blame it on the Brexit?**

BMW was one of the signatories to the letter to the press supporting Cameron's campaign to stay in the EU and has now written to workers at Rolls Royce, Mini, Pressings and Engine plants, warning that leaving the EU would increase costs and could affect parts supplies and recruitment. Ford, Toyota and Nissan have all done the same - telling workers their jobs depend on EU membership!

BMW claimed its letter was a

response to questions from workers, denying it was trying to scare us into voting to stay in Europe. But of course Cameron seized on the letter, while BMW Group chief executive Harald Krueger added that a vote to leave would be "very regrettable". Leave campaigners cried foul, as expected, but many of us just resent being told by the boss how we should vote. As if any of these companies really give a damn about



our job prospects, or terms and conditions! BMW devotes whole teams of management to finding new ways of cutting everything to the bone! Their one and only concern is their profit.

**• What's the hold up?**

So what's happening about the pay deal, now running two months late? We're told 3 days have been allocated next month for talks - a good month after this shift/pay cut was sprung on us. But what we want from a pay offer - to more than restore all our earnings - is not complicated. So what's holding it up and why won't the union officials tell us? If it's BMW wanting strings for everything, they can go to hell. They've already had more than enough concessions - not least in their shift adjustment taking precedence

over our pay! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Cowley 24/2/16]

**• Bus carries the BMW logo**

When the 2015 Rich List was recently published, it was pointed out that less than a busload of the world's richest billionaires owned as much wealth as 3.9bn or half the world population. Now we learn that BMW shareholders Susanna and Stefan Quandt are both included on this bus. Add their fortunes together and they're also ranked as the 8th richest family worldwide. All highly relevant facts for when we consider BMW's offer!

[Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Cowley 24/2/16]

**• Shrinking holidays**

Not content with cutting our working week and net pay, BMW uses the shift change starting on 29th Feb to cut the annual holiday entitlement by 2 days: from 26 to 24 days. For agency workers and those of us on BMW's beginner's entitlement (though we've been here 10 years plus!), that means only 2 days holiday of our own choosing after BMW has claimed its 22 days shut-out! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Cowley 10/2/16]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**

**Panther: can it be resurrected?**

We all remember the big fuss around the launch of the Panther engine. First, all the hype over the cutting-edge technology of the new line, the 10-page long application forms to have the 'privilege' of being admitted to the Panther's Lair, then the 140 workers sent there (regardless of whether they filled out the forms or not), the T-shirts we all got, the photo-ops, the heroic 'launch' of the line, that holy grail - 'Job One'!

And then, after barely two months

of production - KAPUT! All 6,000 engines, worth more than £10m - worthless! Problems with the gasket that led to gas leakages and crumbly metal alloys that left it anything but 'durable'! Not that managers noticed, of course. After all, doing 'sample' tests of one out of every hundred engines without a thermostat or water running through, is almost as good as doing no test at all! They had to be put in Transit vans in Turkey before they found the problems! We



couldn't stop smiling when we heard! So what's Ford going to do now? To resurrect the engine, they flew in a small army of American engineers, who apparently took one look at the mayhem in Dagenham - and fled to Dunton!

[Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/3/16]

**• They want a stoppage over this?**

Unbelievable! Panther mates were told we'd have 3-shift pay protection till April - but as soon as we get shifted to Puma - which is actually still on 3 shifts, which we're working - our pay is cut to 2-shifts! Is this company mad? Or trying to provoke a riot? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/3/16]

**• Neighbourly robber**

Of course Ford (led by that "nice" new Guy-Next-Door) would like to recoup its

losses - this Puma cock-up will cost them a few quid (~13m!). So they're starting by paying us short? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/3/16]

**• ...or a stoppage over this?**

As to the way everyone's being pushed from pillar to post - well, it's p\*\*\*ing us off! Enough to make us down tools and just fold our arms. So, temps who've been working on Puma for months are suddenly displaced from their jobs by loaned-in Pantherites - who get their "old" jobs back..?! Shouldn't "skills" allow mates to do any job? Bad feelings all around. And totally unnecessary.

**• We don't shake hands with managers**

Yeah, except that managers, who're to blame for this mess, can't make up their minds. First they man up the Puma minishift and then they de-man it! And 29 Pantherites, selected for their "Puma skills" (welcomed by Puma boss with a handshake!), are suddenly told Friday, they can go to the Gulag's Chicken Farm (Tiger engine)! So now we can apply our "Puma experience" to Tiger? OK. Stop the line! Sit down! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/3/16]

## Militarism

### Britain's armed militias

Britain is one of the world's biggest providers of mercenaries, according to a recent survey published by the charity "War on Want".

At the height of the occupation of Iraq, about 80 British military and security companies operated there. Now hundreds are operating behind the scenes in areas of conflict around the world. They include: G4S, Aegis Defense Services (now part of GardaWorld), Control Risks and Olive Group, and their biggest single "markets" are Iraq and Afghanistan.

The British government's favourite "outsourcing partner", G4S, is the world's largest such company. Last year G4S secured a £188m-contract to provide "security" for the Basra Gas Company, in Iraq. In Africa, where G4S has a £500m turnover,



British mercenary in Afghanistan

its customers include Royal Dutch Shell and AngloGold Ashanti. As to the "security" G4S provides for these multinational companies, it means supplying them with private armies to protect their looting of local natural resources from the justified

anger of the poor populations of the countries in which they operate.

Of course, the privatisation of war is nothing new for the imperialist powers. And if it was profitable enough for the capitalists, they would privatise the army itself. ☐

### • Guns for charity

The industrialised countries' Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD), has recently changed its definition of "foreign aid" to include defence spending and training.

Of course, this is effectively rubber-stamping what has always happened anyway. One of the biggest money-spinners for western arms companies has been the covert military aid provided by their governments to poor countries' dictators. As to "foreign aid" itself, it has usually included the proviso that some - if not all of it - would be used to buy goods they often don't need from the companies of the donor countries, including "non-military"

equipment for their armies, such as transport vehicles. By merging the two kinds of aid into one single benign-sounding "foreign aid", the OECD is just putting the seal of charitable legitimacy on the rich countries' stranglehold over the rest of the world.

Nevertheless the OECD managed to justify this change by claiming its aim was to "address the root causes of conflicts, forced displacements and refugee flows". As if pouring weapons into the poor countries while looting their inadequate resources and pushing them further into poverty weren't the root causes of conflicts across the world!



Arms fair in London: a profitable business

### • Re-inventing the Cold War?

Cameron has decided to send five extra ships to the Baltic as part of a NATO buildup against Russia. In addition, 6,000 British troops will be stationed on a rotational basis in six countries bordering Russia.

Of course, as in any other part of the world, the rich imperialist countries

which dominate NATO are in the business of preserving their economic and political interests in the Baltic region - in this case, mostly against Russia, because it is the only country in the region which has the means to stand up to their diktats. However, since they can't really use the "Red Scare" of the Cold

War, they're now using a "Putin Scare" to justify their military presence.

So while the Cold War is dead, it is now given a second lease of life, while the arms manufacturers have another opportunity to help themselves from public funds and make even bigger profits.

In addition to this monthly paper, we publish fortnightly bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a quarterly journal, "Class Struggle" and the "Internationalist Communist Forums" - a series of pamphlets on topical issues.

If you wish to find out more about our ideas, activities and publications, contact the Workers' Fight activist who sold you this issue of our paper, or write to us either by e-mail, at [contact@w-fight.org](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

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